



June 2019

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The Octagon

Severna Park United Methodist Church News

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Life in Transition (Always)

This season on the calendar is packed full of significant time-markers, beginnings-and-endings all wrapped into one. For instance, in a two-week span, our daughter Christine gave birth to our first grandchild, Charlie Elizabeth, I attended the end-of-the-year UMYF banquet where we honored and

said goodbye to our graduating high school seniors and then over the next two nights, offered a blessing to all of the 4 year-olds and their families who were "graduating" from our exceptional nursery school.

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Family Mission Trip Report

A few weekends ago, a group of our elementary students and their parents traveled to Washington DC to work with local organizations and missions.

On Friday afternoon, we were warmly greeted by the staff of The Pilgrimage church. Our children thoroughly enjoyed the church's playground. The adults enjoyed the climate control. (It was a hot weekend for May.)

On Saturday, we began by preparing and serving a delicious breakfast at **Charlie's Place**, a daily feeding ministry of St. Margaret's Episcopal Church. Our kids had no interest in standing around waiting to be directed. They wanted to be busy and useful at every step, receiving high praises for their willingness to work hard. They learned how to cut pie, hold dishes without burning themselves, and how to use an industrial dishwasher! The dining room team prepared pastries, passed out toiletries, and talked with the guests as they arrived. The kids played checkers and Go Fish! with the guests. After we cleaned up breakfast, we toured their beautiful sanctuary and talked about how we saw God at work through our interaction with the guests and in one another.

In the afternoon, we went to **A Wider Circle** in Silver Spring, where they collect and distribute household goods to those in need. They have a waiting list of people in need, some waiting up to 6 months for a turn to come and collect items. Each family is limited in the items they can take due to the great needs in

the area. The items they need most are twin mattresses (they take used ones and professionally clean them!). We put our garage sale skills to work sorting toys, linens, and baby clothes, organizing for several hours before breaking for the day. We talked about the great need in our community, the generosity for others, the challenge of having a garage sale every single day, and the appreciation for well sorted donations. Once again, our kids had boundless energy taking items from the sorting floor upstairs to the "store" for restocking. And of course, helping families find the perfect toys for their kids.

After worshipping on Sunday, we met with speakers from the **National Coalition for the Homeless**. They told us their stories and then helped us take lunches to hungry people in Dupont Circle. Our guide helped us with how to address those in need and gently hand food to unhoused neighbors whether awake or asleep. Our kids quickly became comfortable approaching people and asking if they would like some lunch. When it appeared that we had packed too many bagged lunches, our kids wanted to find more people to serve, so we divided up and sent teams down surrounding streets to hand out lunches. Our kids were praised by the guide for being exceptionally generous and willing to become vulnerable in approaching people they did not know. Our generosity became contagious as one homeless neighbor walked us around to ensure his fellow unhoused neighbors on side streets were cared for. I saw God in our kids living into our scripture for the weekend, Matthew 25:34-45.

Our guiding question throughout the trip was, “Where do we see God?” I saw God in our kids as they grew comfortable caring for those in great need. I saw God in our adults as they took risks to let their kids serve in a new way. I saw God in the relationships that formed between the kids and adults. And I saw God in each homeless neighbor as they let their guards down to play games and puzzles, make art, and chat with our kids.

It was a blessing to be able to take this trip with your support, and we are looking forward to planning the next trip for the 2019-2020 school year.

Visit severnaparkumc.org/missionsurvey to take a short survey telling us about the kind of family mission trip YOU want to take. The deadline for the survey is **June 16**. Contact Erica Benjamin for more information.

ebenjamin@severnaparkumc.org



Life in Transition (Always)

(continued from page 1)

Two days later I met with the provisional deacons and elders who are part of the Residency in Ministry program that I coordinate for the Board of Ordained Ministry, about a third of whom were completing their final year in the program and many moving on to ordination at this year's Annual Conference. I left that gathering early so I could rush back to church in time to officiate at a memorial service for Doug Smith, the spouse of Rev. Sherrin Marshall, a retired UMC colleague who now calls SPUMC her church home. All of those sacred transitions – literally from birth to death and everything in between – in just 16 short days.

Additionally, as I write this, I am about to head to the Annual Conference of the Baltimore-Washington United Methodist Churches. There we will mark retirements, remember the lives of the saints departed, ordain and commission deacons and elders (go Carissa!), and spend a good deal of time talking, praying, and discerning about the United Methodist Church, which is very much in transition, too. We'll be asked to endorse a new vision statement that comes with some restructuring at the Annual Conference level, intended to refine and sharpen our missional focus as a collective body and in our individual churches.

We'll also be digesting and responding to the recent actions of the General Conference which upheld and strengthened existing policies and practices around the ordination of LGBTQ+ persons and the ability of UMC clergy to

officiate at same-gender weddings (we said no to both). In spite of U.S. delegates clearly favoring a more expansive plan that would have made room for traditionalists, centrists and progressives, with no pastor or church being required to violate their consciences in these matters, our global denomination “doubled down” and added punitive consequences for clergy, bishops and Boards of Ordained Ministry who violate the Book of Discipline. This has led to celebration in some sectors of the church but also a lot of healthy conversation, exploration of alternatives (might the US church “breakaway” or be given some more autonomy on these and other matters?) and movements of resistance in other parts of the church, including our Annual Conference. Where this all will take us is hard to predict but it is clear that our church is in a time of serious transition.

I take heart in knowing that being in a state of constant flux is nothing new for followers of Jesus. In this week's lectionary reading for Ascension Sunday, Luke records the dramatic story of Jesus ascending back to God after a period of mysterious resurrection appearances (Acts 1:1-11). The disciples are left staring up at the sky and wondering what comes next when an angel basically tells them to get to work and trust the promise that Jesus has just given them: you will receive the Holy Spirit and with that Spirit comes power and hope. That is the promise that I am clinging to during this season of joyful celebration in our lives and turbulent transition in the UMC. I invite you to pick your chin up off the ground, trust the Spirit and get to work with me living and sharing

the unconditional, radical, life-changing love of God in Christ in and through our church, making it a place where all God's children are genuinely welcome.

Be God's,

Rev. Ron



Coffee House & Art Show

We're hosting a Coffee House & Art Show on **Saturday, June 15, 7-9pm**. Come out and enjoy a relaxed evening of light refreshments and great original music from some of our own musicians and a few guests. We're still seeking original art to display in advance of and during the Coffeehouse. Have something you'd like to contribute? Contact Chris.

cdillard@severnaparkumc.org



Summer Worship in the Garden

Join us for relaxed services featuring a variety of preachers and musical styles and allowing you to worship God in a beautiful setting. Worship in the Garden will be held on **2nd and 4th Wednesdays** at **7pm** throughout the summer: June 12 & 26, July 10 & 24, August 14 & 28.

These services will also provide an opportunity in those weeks when you are traveling on the weekend(s) to stay connected in prayer and community here. Put it on your mental radar and plan to join us.

Are You On Pace?

It's hard to believe that the year is almost half over. Where does the time go?

How are you doing on meeting your pledge to SPUMC for 2019? Are you on pace for the year? SPUMC relies on the generosity of the congregation throughout the year in order keep its operations going including its missions, education, and music.

Additionally, are you taking steps to maximize your tax deduction for your giving? With the new tax laws, there are some giving nuances that did not exist before. If you are not sure, check with your tax professional or ask the church for some general guidance. Members of the Finance or Endowment Committees would be happy to talk to you about it.

Annual Conference Update

More than 1,700 United Methodists gathered in Baltimore for the 235th Session of the Baltimore-Washington Conference **May 29-June 1**. Rev. Carissa was ordained an Elder on Friday and *Chris Dillard* helped lead worship throughout the entire Conference. We'll be providing some recaps of the highlights in our July Octagon. In the meantime, you can learn more about what transpired there by visiting the BWC website.

bwcumg.org



Nursery School Graduation





SPUMC Prayer Group

Our church has a faithful team that meets weekly to pray over the joys and concerns of our congregation and community. But you may be wondering – how does this work? Here's a little more information:

What happens to our prayer requests?

1. They are prayed over weekly by our staff and clergy, with the “clergy only” requests only shared amongst our four pastors.
2. They are sent by email weekly to a large team of individuals who pray over them.
3. They are printed in the church bulletin the following Sunday so everyone can offer prayers.
4. They are given to the Prayer Team (a group of 5) who meets every Wednesday to pray over them both weekly in the group and daily at home. The prayers on the Team's list are kept for several weeks to 6+ months, depending on the request. The list is updated with new prayer

requests each week, and often includes over 500 individual requests.

How can I help the Prayer Team and the SPUMC Prayer Ministry?

- When you offer someone in prayer, share their name. Even a first name enables us to pray more personally than just indicating a relationship (i.e., “prayers for my neighbor's son”).
- Be specific in your prayer requests... (i.e., “prayers for Ben, for back pain”)
- And then send us updates! (“Ben has been healed of back pain!”)

There is power in prayer. Thank you for so faithfully raising one another up, and making this a church where we care for one another in prayer at all times.

If you are interested in being part of the SPUMC Prayer Ministry, contact Beth Frank at bfrank@severnaparkumc.org to be added to the email prayer list. If you would like to join the Wednesday morning prayer team, contact Katherine Geissler.

katherinegeissler@icloud.com

“Biblical Womanhood” with Rachel Held Evans

Just like the author of ***A Year of Biblical Womanhood***, I’ve always been a strong-willed and independent young woman. And yet as a lifelong Christian, I’ve also wrestled with scriptures that encourage women to cover their heads and remain quiet in church. I love this book, because the author embarks on a radical life experiment, vowing to take all of the Bible’s instructions for women as literally as possible for a whole year. As she pursues different virtues each month, Rachel Held Evans’ quest leads her to grow out her hair, make her own clothes, cover her head, obey her husband, rise before dawn, abstain from gossip, remain silent in church, and even camp out in the front yard during her period.

I’m excited to gather with a group of women from our church this summer to explore “biblical womanhood” with Rachel Held Evans. Whether you are a woman with a traditional view of scripture or one who cringes at those verses, I hope you’ll join me! Along with the humor, insight, and compassion of Rachel’s journey, I know that we’ll grow in love for one another, and come to a deeper understanding of God’s word and God’s will for us.

We’re offering 2 different times for this study, so come to whichever works better for you and your family. These groups will meet **Thursdays, 9:30-11am** and **6:30-8pm, June 13 to July 25**. Books are available for \$10. Contact me (Rev. Carissa) for more info.

carissa@severnaparkumc.org

Sacred Worth Up & Running

We’ve just launched a group for LGBTQ+ persons, family members, **and allies** (people who simply want to be supportive) as a safe space for support and conversation about how our church can be more welcoming. We had a great first gathering last month and our next meeting will be **Tuesday, June 18, 7pm** in the Parlor. In this moment as our global church continues to wrestle with issues of human sexuality, it is more important than ever that we are intentional and clear that our church welcomes ALL GOD’S CHILDREN. Contact Rev. Ron for more info. ron@severnaparkumc.org

The Faith & Race Book Group

We’ll be taking a break for the summer and will resume meeting in September. A couple of books that we’ve read so far to consider taking to the beach or mountains with you are: *Just Mercy* by Bryan Stevenson, *The Other Wes Moore* by Wes Moore, *Born a Crime* by Trevor Noah, *Raising White Kids* by Jennifer Harvey, and *America’s Original Sin* by Jim Wallis. Upcoming this fall we are planning to discuss: *The Cross & the Lynching Tree* by James Cone, *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas, and *How to Be Less Stupid About Race: On Racism, White Supremacy, and the Racial Divide* by Crystal Marie Fleming. We may also organize a movie night this summer, so stay posted for more details.

ron@severnaparkumc.org

Life In Transition

UMYF News

United Methodist Youth Fellowship will begin its summer program and continue to meet informally every **Sunday** (except June 30) at the usual time: **7–8:30pm**. We gather for games, sports, contests, food, and just generally being together. Special nights will be announced ahead, events like Bingo, Messy Game Night, and Minute-to-Win-It games. Youth going into grades 7-12 in the fall are welcome!

lferrell@severnaparkumc.org

Lee Ferrell Scholarship

The Confirmation Class of 2002 wanted to thank Rev. Lee for her work with the class and all she does for our youth here. They instituted the Lee Ferrell Scholarship to honor Lee AND to assist and recognize college students for their involvement with our congregation. It was intended to encourage our young people to remain active, as well as to assist them in school.

The scholarship is awarded first to students going into ministry, then teaching and other service professions. Church members are given first priority, then active UMYF members.

Applications for this scholarship are now available from Rev. Lee or from the front office (see Beth Frank). The deadline is June 19. Monies awarded are sent directly to the college.

Donations may be made to this fund at any time. Checks can be made to SPUMC with a notation "Lee Ferrell Scholarship."

2019 Graduates

Congratulations to this year's high school graduates!

We are happy for you and wish you the best in the next chapter of your lives!

Archbishop Spalding

Marlena Summers

SPHS

Elizabeth Bosanko

Matt Bredeck

Harrison Colborne

Spencer Colborne

Mitch Decker

Evan Dill

Molly Feeney

Laura Folts

Alek Fredriksson

Chase Gruver

Erick Howard

Emily Lechowicz

Chase Meadows

Josh Ohler

Sean Ostrowski

Sam Shirey

Tommy Wallace

South River, STEM Program

Zach Young

Severn School

Will Brodbeck

Reilly Mitchell

Marah Vain-Callahan

St. Mary's

Garrett Nilsen

Moms Connect Family Gathering

Moms Connect families will be gathering for an afternoon of fellowship and food at Tracy Emmersen's house on **Saturday, June 15, 3-8pm**. This is a great chance for families to connect over the summer. We will also gather July 20 and August 17.

If you are interested, please contact Erica.
ebenjamin@severnaparkumc.org

VBS News & Info

Serve the Lord with gladness this year at VBS! We are in need of opening and closing leaders as well as an A/V team during the week of July 22.

Also, you can help out VBS (and Summer Sunday School) from the comfort of your own home. We need some things you may have around your house. Please bring in as you collect them as we need them at various points throughout the summer. We continue updating this list regularly:

- *toilet & paper towel tubes

- *seeds- old seed packets, interesting seeds from your yard and produce, etc.

- *houseplants- downsizing, too many spider plants, the harder the better

Or, you can pick up a project in fellowship hall. Take a project home & return it by the due date.

Question about the details? Email Erica.

ebenjamin@severnaparkumc.org

Pentecost & Confirmation

Be sure to wear flame colors on **Sunday, June 9** as we celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit and the birthday of the church. We will also confirm our 2019 Confirmation Class at 11!

This year's confirmands include: Katherine Barger, Corey Fleming, Jake Fritz, Pierce Hanlon, Kooper Haynes, Sarah Hedenstad, Berit Isenberg, Dylan Jones, Sierra Lane, Christopher Lanier, Alex Lecouras, Megan Linthicum, John McCone, Elliot Newton, Chris Nunn, Matthew O'Donnell, Cole Parsons, Katie Patzkowski, Sophia Patzkowski, Kiernan Robinson, Ava Schultz, Ben Sealey, Danielle Sexton, Morgan Shirey, Ben Single, Duke Sweeney, and Cooper Van Horne.

Sunday School Volunteers

This summer our children will learn one Bible story throughout the season. The Parable of the Sower (Mark 4:1-9) teaches people about turning their hearts toward God, and we'd love to have you help teach! It's a great way to serve. At 9:30am we'll have classes for Toddlers, Preschool (every Sunday), and Elementary (June & August only), and at 11am we'll have one class for PreK & Elementary (June & August only).

Nursery care will be available at all services throughout the summer. On weeks without Sunday School, children are invited to worship with their families (July 7-Aug 4.) For more information check out the bulletin board as you enter the children's wing, or contact Erica.

ebenjamin@severnaparkumc.org

UMYF Senior Banquet

What a great night honoring our graduating seniors, handing out serious and crazy awards, welcoming back alum and all in all celebrating a great year of UMYF! Thanks to Rev. Lee and her amazing team of counselors for all that they invest in our youth!



Severna Park United Methodist Church
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